

# Ten Guaranteed Ways to Screw Up Any Project

*A web-published article by Michael Greer*

1. **Don't bother prioritizing your organization's overall project load.** After all, if there's a free-for-all approach to your overall program management (i.e., "survival of the fittest"), then the projects that survive will be those that were destined to survive. In the meantime, senior management need not trouble themselves aligning projects with strategic goals or facing the logical imperative that people simply cannot have 12 number one priorities! (See my online article [What's Project Portfolio Management \(PPM\) and Why Should Project Managers Care About It?](#))
2. **Encourage sponsors and key stakeholders to take a passive role on the project team.** Let them assert their authority to reject deliverables at random, without participating in defining project outcomes in a high-resolution fashion. And above all, don't bother project sponsors when their constituents (such as key SMEs and reviewers) drop the ball and miss their deadlines.
3. **Set up ongoing committees focusing on management process** (such as TQM groups, etc.) and make project team members participate in frequent meetings and write lots of reports... preferably when critical project deadlines are coming due.
4. **Interrupt team members relentlessly** ... preferably during their time off. Find all sorts of trivial issues that "need to be addressed," then keep their beepers and cell phones ringing and bury them in emails to keep them off balance.
5. **Create a culture in which project managers are expected to "roll over" and take it when substantive new deliverables are added** halfway through the project. (After all, only a tradesperson like a plumber or electrician would demand more money or more time for additional services; our people are "professionals" and should be prepared to be "flexible.")
6. **Half way through the project**, when most of the deliverables have begun to take shape, **add a whole bunch of previously unnamed stakeholders** and ask them for their opinions about the project and its deliverables.
7. Encourage the sponsor to approve deliverables informally (with nods, smiles, and verbal praise); **never force sponsors to stand behind their approvals with a formal sign-off.** (In other words, give 'em plenty of room to weasel out of agreements!)
8. **Make sure project managers have lots of responsibilities and deadlines, but no authority** whatsoever to acquire or remove people from the project; to get enough money, materials, or facilities; or insist on timely participation of SMEs and key reviewers.
9. **Describe project deliverables in the vaguest possible terms** so sponsors and reviewers have plenty of leeway to reinvent the project outputs repeatedly as the project unfolds.
10. **Get projects up and running as quickly as possible** – don't worry about documenting agreements in a formal project charter, clearly describing team roles/responsibilities, or doing a thorough work breakdown analysis. After all, we know what we're doing and we trust each other. So let's get to it without a pesky audit trail!

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